

THE VIRASAIVA MOVEMENT

19

in the country. Bijjala, Basavanna* s patron but probably an opponent of too rapid reform, met his end in these disturbances. Basavanna also "was in fear of assassination from enemies. It is likely that he was assassinated. At any rate, he disappeared from life about the same time. To most men in his day he must have seemed a fanatic, too eager for change and unmindful of the commotion he was causing in the name of popular uplift. Even to men on his own side he did not always seem faultless. Many people of his and later generations however saw in his life an achievement possible only to an incarnation of god-head. These people deified him and worshipped him. His followers believe that he was an incarnation of Nandi, the bull of Siva, sent to the world to resuscitate the true faith.

The sayings of Basavanna appear mostly to have been recorded from time to time to express the thoughts that were passing through his mind. This seems to have been the practice of the leaders of the movement. As success came, as criticism came, as friends praised, as enemies derided, as his own heart seemed to approach and recede from an ideal which his conscience set before him, this man gave expression to his joy, his pain, his modesty, his confidence, his exaltation and his depression in a sort of diary. Several of the * vachanas' seem to have been

called forth by events
in the society of -which Basavanna
was leader. Some
of them look as if they were his
opinion in cases referred
to him by the elders. Others relate
to social practices
in the new community. The
observations are gene-
rally addressed to his deity Kudala
Sangameswara or